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MOTLEY MEASURES

Portrait by Eve Watson Schütze

B. L. P.

Motley Measures

By

Bert Leston Taylor

Chicago
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To
"J·K"

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NOTE

THE bulk of the verses in this collection first appeared in *The Chicago Tribune*, under "A Line-o'-Type or Two." For this reason a number of jingles are included that otherwise would be omitted, as being too local in interest.

"Motley 's the only wear."

TIME'S the Master Critic,
Only he can say
What, among these verses,
Good and bad and worse is —
What will live for aye.

This which I consider
Good, as verses go,
Time might care no whit for,
Not a little bit for.
How is one to know?

This which I might pass up
As of little worth,
Time might choose and cherish
Till the nations perish
From the face of Earth.

Since in every case, then,
I should be in doubt,
Why should I assay them?
Why attempt to weigh them? —
Time will sort 'em out.

INVOCATION

O COMIC Spirit, hovering overhead,
With sage's brows and finely-tempered smile,
From whose bowed lips a silvery laugh is sped
At pedantry, stupidity, and guile,—

So visioned by that sage on whom you bent
Always a look of perfect sympathy,
Whose laugh, like yours, was never idly spent,—
Look, Spirit, sometimes fellowly on me!

Instruct and guide me in the gentle art
Of thoughtful laughter — once satyric noise;
Vouchsafe to me, I humbly ask, some part,
However little, of your perfect poise.

Keep me from bitterness, contempt, and scorn,
From anger, pride, impatience, and disdain.
When I am self-deceived your smile shall warn,
Your volleyed laughter set me right again.

Am I inspired to mirth or mockery,
Grant, Spirit, that it be not overdrawn;
And am I moved to malice, let it be
Only "the sunny malice of a faun."

CANOPUS

WHEN quacks with pills political would dope us,
When politics absorbs the livelong day,
I like to think about the star Canopus,
So far, so far away.

Greatest of visioned suns, they say who list 'em;
To weigh it science always must despair.
Its shell would hold our whole dinged solar system,
Nor ever know 'twas there.

When temporary chairmen utter speeches,
And frenzied henchmen howl their battle hymns,
My thoughts float out across the cosmic reaches
To where Canopus swims.

When men are calling names and making faces,
And all the world's ajangle and ajar,
I meditate on interstellar spaces
And smoke a mild seegar.

For after one has had about a week of
The arguments of friends as well as foes,
A star that has no parallax to speak of
Conduces to repose.

SPRING IN THE SHOPS

In the manner of Ezra Pound

WILL people accept them? (i. e. these bargains)
O dainty colorings and range of prices!
Gowns of charmeuse in all the colors of the season;
Blouse suits of Russian cloth, tucked belt of softest satin,
And only $37.50.

Beautiful but inexpensive hats (values unprecedented).
Lovely French flowers combined
With handsome ribbon or numidi, roses, lilacs, wistaria, in beautiful colorings.

And petticoats, in crêpe de chine and chiffon.
The petticoat oddly cut and gored,
That holds its fullness just below the knee,
And yet puffs out above,
Giving the new and fashionable outline.
Soft petticoats of sheerest voile, opened on side with clasps, in straight effect,
Silk jersey tucked and plaited ruffle, with underlay of same,
Special at $1.95.

THE CUSSED DAMOZEL

THE Cussed Damozel cut loose
About half-past eleven,
Prepared to do as wild a deed
As any under heaven.
Oil-soaked rags were in her hands,
And the bombs in her grip were seven.

She cried, "We'll blow this mansion up
Where Lloyd and George do dwell!"
"Wow!" cried her fellow-suffs, whose names
Were sweet as caramel —
Millicent, Pansy, Rosalys,
Phyllis and Christabel.

THE GADDER

AMONG the folks who write me,
From Frisco to Cape Ann,
Is one from whom I often hear,
And whom, I hope, I sometimes cheer —
The pleasant Traveling Man.

His lot is far from being
An iridescent dream;
And yet, I nearly always find,
He holds a happy state of mind,
With cheerfulness his theme.

Despite the dreary cooking
With which he must contend,
Despite the beds as hard as bricks,
And absence from his wife and chicks,
Sometimes for weeks on end —

Though night is void of music,
And care infests the day —
He greets existence with a smile,
And scatters cheer with every mile
That marks his treadmill way.

And if he sometimes writes me
  A note to give me pain,
I guess the reason for his knock:
He had to rise at three o'clock
  To catch some dismal train.

He roves the country over,
  Beersheba unto Dan.
May Heaven's blessing light on him,
And keep him sound in wind and limb —
  The pleasant Traveling Man!

HENCE THESE TEARS

TO charitable deeds I'm not addicted,
For sentiment I do not care a prune,
And yet I weep at poverty depicted
In any illustration or cartoon.
My heart, though flinty, beats a little faster;
I choke, I sob, I simply have to bawl
When I behold that bit of broken plaster —
That patch of broken plaster on the wall.

I am not touched when halted by privation,
By frowzy tramps and hollow-chested hags,
Nor moved by the familiar illustration
Of starvelings in exaggerated rags.
The 'tiny tot' with toes and elbows showing,
The widow in the super-tattered shawl
Affect me not, but one thing gets me going —
The patch of broken plaster on the wall.

Denuded laths, forlornly emblematic
Of penury, and hopelessness, and gloom!
I see the pallid poet in his attic,
The seamstress in her six-by-seven room.
And like the wall my heart is always broken,
I weep like Mr Southey's waterfall;
For always I observe that tell-tale token —
The patch of broken plaster on the wall.

Oh sign of bitter pill and persecution!
Oh symbol of the wolf beyond the door!
Oh hallmark of the direst destitution!
I howl — I've howled a thousand times before.
Ah, would I were a Vanderbilt or Astor! —
I'd carry joy to every humble hall,
I'd take to each a nickel's worth of plaster —
And patch that broken plaster on the wall.

A BALLADE OF STAR DUST

THE heavens are open as a scroll
Before the ardent eye of man,
And from celestial pole to pole
One pattern serves the cosmic plan.
We do not know — nor ever can —
Its whence or when, its end or aim,
But this we see, when skies we scan:
The stuff of Cosmos is the same.

Star dust and stars — an endless shoal —
And light-lanes labyrinthian.
The part is image of the whole,
One pattern serves the cosmic plan.
For all resolves as all began —
Dead worlds and quick, and suns aflame;
From Acrux to Aldebaran
The stuff of Cosmos is the same.

Somewhere among the worlds that roll
In Night's great glittering caravan,
There sings perchance a kindred soul:
One pattern serves the cosmic plan.
He pipes upon the reeds of Pan
A tune like this, with some such name.
"Ave!" I fling across the span —
"The stuff of Cosmos is the same!"

Hail, fellow of a far-flung clan!
One pattern serves the cosmic plan.
Star dust our end, from dust we came:
The stuff of Cosmos is the same.

THE RIME OF THE BETSY JANE

A manuscript found in a bottle

IT was the good ship Betsy Jane,
That sailed in a spanking breeze,
With a bunch of militant Suffs on board,
Condemned to an island unexplored
In far off southern seas.

The Suffs they went on a hunger strike,
And nothing eat would they,
So the skipper, a conscientious man,
Was forced to the forcible feeding plan,
In the genteel British way.

A squall came up and the ship went down,
And we of the Betsy Jane
Were left on a raft in a dreadful plight,
With never a friendly sail in sight,
On the well-known raging main.

Our skipper, a conscientious man,
Divided the grub with care.
Says he: "It's share and share alike,
You dames can eat or stay on strike,
But damme! there's your share."

The waves ran high, the grub ran low,
And never a sail we saw.
The Suffs they scorned the pork and bread,
And "Votes for wimmen!" was all they said,
And never a chaw they'd chaw.

The starving crew of the Betsy Jane
They watched their end draw near,
Till, "Blast my eyes!" said Bosun Bill,
"If *they* won't eat their chuck *I* will!"
And the rest of us give a cheer.

But the skipper, a conscientious man,
A pistol huge drew he.
"Who touches a hunk of yonder bread
Dies like a dog! Back up!" he said,
And —

. . . . . .

Right here the tale in the bottle stopped,
And left me on tiptoe;
For how they straightened the matter out,
Or whether their fate is still in doubt,
I'd jolly well like to know.

THOSE FLAPJACKS OF BROWN'S

OH light as the foam on the Plover,
That mottles that magical stream;
Oh light as the vows of a lover
And the sighs of a summer night's dream;
Aye, light as the gossamer stuff of
Salome's impalpable gowns,
Are the flapjacks I can't get enough of —
Those flapjacks of Brown's.

A cure for the cares that beset us,
Each cake is a separate joy;
Gold-brown as the sweets of Hymettus,
But lacking their classical cloy;
Brown-gold as the burr-oak in Autumn,
This masterpiece cookery crowns.
They are served with the trout (when you've
caught 'em) —
Those flapjacks of Brown's.

They come piping hot from the griddle,
And you tuck away tier upon tier,
An ecstasy seizes your middle,
A sense of ineffable cheer.
Each stack that you tenderly butter
The maple juice lovingly drowns,
And you eat, till no word you can utter,
Those flapjacks of Brown's.

O cakes of alluring complexion!
O dainties as light as the dew!
O flapjacks that fond recollection
Will always present to my view!
Their like you will never discover,
All vainly you quest them in towns.
They are born on the banks of the Plover —
Those flapjacks of Brown's.

BATTLE SONG

"We stand at Armageddon and we battle for the Lord"
—THEODORE ROOSEVELT

WE stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord,
And all we ask to stead us is a blessing on each sword;
And tribes and factions mingle in one great fighting clan
Who issue forth to battle behind a fighting man.

We stand at Armageddon, where men have stood before,
And whatso be the cost of it our voice is still for war.
Now let the traitor truckle, the falterer go fawn,
We only ask to follow where the battle line is drawn.

We stand at Armageddon, where fighting men have stood,
And creeds and races mingle in one great brotherhood;
And here from dawn to darkness we battle for the Lord;—
Thy blessing, great Jehovah, on each impatient sword!

June 20, 1912.

CHILDREN

SOMETIMES our welcome has no tongue;
Children are often in the way.
We tolerate them while they're young,
And do not always share their play.

We play our games and they play theirs,
And when a dozen years have flown
They have, we find, their own affairs
And all their interests are their own.

They are, we reason, in our debt,
And wistfully we look for pay:
They give us what we ask — and yet
We feel we're rather in the way.

Our love, now fond, would manifest
Itself in every act and word;
But we are wont to veil it, lest
We feel a little bit absurd.

More fond we grow, and duteous;
We only live for them, we say.
They too would live — but not for us; —
So runs this pleasant world away.

ON THE EVE

NOW fare they forth to battle,
And none for peace shall sue;
And ye who sneer and cavil —
They fight *your* battle, too.
Scoff if you will, but stand aside,
For there is work to do.

All ye who mock and flout them
May go your idle ways:
They care for no man's censure,
They ask for no man's praise.
Against Oppression's sullen ranks
A stainless flag they raise.

And every wife and mother,
And child that hugs her knee,
And every son and father
That is or is to be,
Shall one day rise and praise the men
Who struck for you and me.

Then go they forth to battle,
  And high the hope they hold;
And in the time to follow
  Their story will be told:
For men have fought, and kept the faith,
  Since "the brave days of old."

November 4, 1912.

BALLADE OF A MOSS-GROWN SYMBOL

I MUCH esteem the rubber-stamp cartoons,
Symbols of paleozoic pedigree —
Age-battered emblems that for moons and moons
Have roused my righteous wrath or gurgling glee:
Stern Justice with her Scales and Snickersnee,
The Horn of Plenty stuffed with plums and pears
And hothouse grapes, in wild luxuriancy,
The dear old Paper Cap that Labor wears.

Dear to my heart as dim remembered runes
Of childhood twittered from a nurse's knee,
Are Uncle Sam's starred Hat and Pantaloons,
The Ship of State, the Snake of Anarchy,
The smoking stacks of good old Industry,
The tyrant Trust that nought and no one spares —
All these I cherish, one especially —
The dear old Paper Cap that Labor wears.

Fresh as the dew upon a peck of prunes,
Green as Joe Miller's jocund jeux d'esprit —
So fresh, so green those mossy old lampoons
That never fail to make a hit with me:
The Dinner Pail, the Presidential Bee,
Oblivion's Chasm, to which the dead one
fares,
And — rooted like an oak in memory —
The dear old Paper Cap that Labor wears.

Immortal lid, I lift my own to thee!
Tenacious lid, that Time nor dents nor tears!
Symbol encrusted with antiquity! —
The dear old Paper Cap that Labor wears.

TO THE PROOF ROOM

"O MEN of dark and dismal fate,"
A prey to typographic terrors,
O you who labor long and late,
Correcting other people's errors —
Think not I do not realize
How much I owe your Argus-eyes.

More times than one you've fixed for me
Some flaw in my imperfect "copy,"
Or pointed out indulgently
A line or two distinctly sloppy,
Or marked (how oft I'd hate to say)
An accent in the word 'café.'

Although at times I may appear
A trifle querulous and hateful,
I hope in this to make it clear
I am, and always have been, grateful.
I only ask, O Argus-eyes,
Don't decorate that last 'revise'!

How many are the breaks you mend!
How frequently are you of service!
And few who read this comprehend
How tense your work, how close and nervous.
I understand and sympathize —
Yet beg, keep off that last 'revise'!

Because, to your judicious sight,
A sentence may be in confusion,
Don't feel that you must make it right —
Oh leap not to that vain conclusion!
Therein resides, as like as not,
A joke — a feeble joke, God wot —

But still a joke, whose life depends
Perchance upon a single letter;
And though the line your eye offends,
Seek not, I beg, to make it better.
When I have left the office roof
Oh spare, oh spare that final proof!

In closing I would voice to you
My high esteem of your vocation,
And incidentally renew
My everlasting obligation
For marking (every other day)
That accent in the word 'café.'

THE ICONOCLASTS

FAIR Phryne they say was not shameless;
The fact has been recently aired
That her classic existence was blameless,
As white as the bosom she bared.
We'd got the idea in our noddle
Her conduct was far from correct,
But they tell us that she was a 'model'
In every respect.

Now Sappho is cleared of the fable
That wedded romance to her name;
She lived (so they tell us by cable)
A modest and virtuous dame.
Her conduct was rigidly proper
In spite of her amorous rime,
And gents who attempted to 'cop' her
But wasted their time.

What next! Will they tell us that Thaïs
Was prudent and proper and prim?
That a gentleman's chances with Laïs
(In a manner of speaking) were slim?
Was Salome a saint petticoated,
The victim of scandalous runes?
Were the lips of Aspasia devoted
To prisms and prunes?

Away with your critical history! —
  Its findings we look at askance.
Shall these dames be denuded of mystery,
  These heroines robbed of romance?
Shall any old science professor
  With cherished traditions get gay?
No! A health to Dame Gossip, who —
      bless her! —
  Preserved them for aye.

POST-IMPRESSIONISM

Lines written after viewing Mr Arthur Dove's exposition of the "Simultaneousness of the Ambient

I CANNOT tell you how I love
The canvases of Mr Dove,
Which Saturday I went to see
In Mr Thurber's gallery.

At first you fancy they are built
As patterns for a crazy-quilt,
But soon you see that they express
An ambient simultaneousness.

This thing which you would almost bet
Portrays a Spanish omelette,
Depicts instead, with wondrous skill,
A horse and cart upon a hill.

Now, Mr Dove has too much art
To show the horse or show the cart;
Instead he paints the *creak* and *strain*,
Get it? No pike is half so plain.

This thing which would appear to show
A fancy vest scenario,
Is really quite another thing —
A flock of pigeons on the wing.

But Mr Dove is much too keen
To let a single bird be seen;
To show the pigeons would not do,
And so he simply paints the *coo*.

It's all as simple as can be;
He paints the things you cannot see.
Just as composers please the ear
With 'programme' things you cannot hear.

Dove is the cleverest of chaps;
And, gazing at his rhythmic maps,
I wondered (and I'm wondering yet)
Whether he did them on a bet.

BYGONES

Lines inspired by a view of the Cubist Paintings, followed by a late supper

OR ever a lick of Art was done,
Or ever a one to care,
I was a Purple Polygon
And you were a Sky-Blue Square.

You yearned for me across a void,
For I lay in a different plane.
I'd set my heart on a Red Rhom*boid*,
And your sighing was in vain.

You pined for me, as well I knew,
And you faded day by day,
Until the Square that was heavenly Blue
Had paled to an ashen gray.

A myriad years or less or more
Have softly fluttered by;
Matters are much as they were before,
Except 'tis I that sigh.

I yearn for you, but I have no chance;
You lie in a different plane.
I break my heart for a single glance,
And I break said heart in vain.

And ever I grow more pale and wan,
  And taste your old despair,
When I was a Purple Polygon
  And you were a Sky-Blue Square.

THE HEIGHT OF THE ARTISTIC

In the manner of Dr Holmes

I DID a canvas in the Post —
Impressionistic style.
It looked like Scrambled Eggs on Toast;
I, even, had to smile.

I said, "I'll work this Cubist bluff
With all my might and main,
For folks are falling for the stuff,
No matter how inane."

I called the canvas *Cow With Cud*,
And hung it on the line.
Although to *me* 'twas vague as mud,
'Twas clear to Gertrude Stein.

I have forgotten her remark;
'Twas something, though, like this:
"The sinking rising lightens dark
To be while being bliss."

I hung this canvas, as I say,
And everything went well,
Until upon a fateful day
An accident befell.

There came into the picture hall
A melancholy man;
He saw my picture on the wall
And straight to laugh began.

This laugh, which echoed through the room,
Expanded to a roar;
I never heard a person boom
In such a way before.

His collar burst, his buttons popped,
His coat and weskit split;
Then down upon the floor he flopped,
And floundered in a fit.

Ten days and nights, while hope was faint,
I watched that wretched man;
And since, I never dare to paint
As funny as I can.

ART INSURGENT

"They desire to express the sensation an object presents to them, never the imitation of it"

HOW blest am I who've lived to see
Art from her ancient bonds set free,
Like ladye fair in castle shackled
Until some knight the dragon tackled.

The painter used to learn to draw
That he might paint the things he saw,
But now the canvas he reveals
Is meant to show us how he *feels*.

And if the curious things on view
Afford the layman any clew,
They raise the interesting question,
"Can what he feels be indigestion?"

Now, I'm not obstinately blind,
I view things with an open mind;
I do not say that Futurism
May merely be astigmatism.

I do not urge the Futurist
To hasten to an oculist;
If this or that I can't divine,
It's eight to five the fault is mine.

The point of view — No, that won't do;
There simply is no point of *view*.
Since with *sensation* we are dealing,
We'll have to say, "the point of *feeling*."

Tell me, where's the new art bred,
"Or in the heart or in the head?"
Is it engender'd in the eyes,
Or from the liver doth it rise.

You ask what ails these men. Who knows?
Their pea-green pangs and purple throes
Might be set right with calomel.
As Bunthorne wails, "I cannot tell!"

WOOD MEMORIES

To T. B.

YOU too have come the forest way
That wound among the ancient trees
And crossed the open places gay
With asters bending to the breeze;

And light the burden that you bore
Along the frank and smiling road
That led you to the lonely shore
Where Rapture's very self abode.

You too have known the many moods
Of streams that babbled as they ran
Of far, unravished solitudes
Beneath the primal spell of Pan;

Have halted, reverent, on a hill
And felt what speech can not express —
The "incommunicable thrill"
Of unexpected loveliness.

You too, when owls were on the wing,
Have wakened in the windless wood
And hearkened to the murmuring
Of waters under leafy hood;

Have heard a wakeful sparrow call,
And seen the bees of heaven swarm,
And watched the waning firelight fall
Upon a sleeping comrade's form.

THE WHITE-THROAT

HIGH on a still unbudded bough,
You sing your measured song;
The wilderness is with me now,
A thousand memories throng.

The breathless grove, the windy hill
With popples all astir,
The wayside rose, the tinkling rill,
The flash of wing and fur.

The river, done with wandering,
The silver, silent shore —
These come before me while you sing,
These things, and many more.

Your music in the haunts of men
Is sweet as April's sun,
But oh it is as sweet again
Where unnamed waters run.

For in the brush the birds are few
That have the gift of song,
And so my heart goes out to you
The woodland way along.

SILVER BIRCHES

To M. C.

THE fire god with his flaming brand
Has passed this way and worked his will,
And still the silver birches stand,
A ghostly huddle on the hill.

But wraiths of birches, tempest-blown,
Yet all their glory is not fled.
I love them for the "beauty flown,"
And will not think that they are dead.

The flame has scorched, the gale has bent,
The elements have had their will,
Yet all their beauty is not spent,
The silver lingers on the hill.

When of our youth we are bereft
We love, I heard a woman say,
The chastened beauty that is left
When time has worn the bloom away.

THE ROAD TO ANYWHERE

ACROSS the places deep and dim,
And places brown and bare,
It reaches to the planet's rim —
The Road to Anywhere.

Now east is east, and west is west,
But north lies in between,
And he is blest whose feet have prest
The road that's cool and green.

The road of roads for them that dare
The lightest whim obey,
To follow where the moose or bear
Has brushed his headlong way.

The secrets that these tangles house
Are step by step revealed,
While to the sun the grass and boughs
A store of odors yield.

More sweet these odors in the sun
Than swim in chemists' jars;
And when the fragrant day is done,
Night — and a shoal of stars.

Oh east is east, and west is west,
But north lies full and fair;
And blest is he who follows free
The Road to Anywhere.

RAIN

THE rain is raining all around,
It's raining here and there;
It washes up my lettuce seeds,
And doesn't seem to care.

REWARD

Every night my prayers I say,
And search the garden every day;
And every day, if luck is good,
I get a radish for my food.

THE GARDENER

The gardener is a useful man,
Who fits into my garden plan.
He comes each day to work for me,
Except when he is on a spree.

He plants the peas and things in rows,
And plays upon them with a hose.
He gives the garden every care,
Except when he is on a tear.

The gardener works till day is done,
And never seems to mind the sun.
He keeps my garden full of crops,
Except when he is full of hops.

THE COW

The friendly cow all red and white,
I love with love intense;
She wakes me with her bell at night,
And blunders through my fence.

She wanders like a vagrant breeze,
Most amiable of brutes;
She tramples down my beans and peas,
And crops the tender shoots.

HAPPY THOUGHT

This world is so full of a number of bugs,
I'm sure every plant should be sprinkled
with drugs.

SONG — MR C - RN - G - E

A PRINCELIER son of Plutus never
Did in this world exist;
To nobody second,
I'm easily reckoned
The boss philanthropist.
It is my most inane endeavor
To rid myself of pelf
So every cent'll
Quite incidental-
Ly advertise myself.

My object all sublime
I shall achieve in time —
To show that opulence is a crime,
That opulence is a crime;
And make each million spent
Eternally represent
A never-ending advertisement —
An endless advertisement.

I lie awake nights inventing plans
To give my wealth away.
I've libraries scattered
And spattered and splattered
All over the U. S. A.

And every hour or so I start
A 'Fund' for this or that;
But somehow or other,
In one way or t'other,
They fall extremely flat.

I fling my gold like sightless Plutus,
The mythological mint,
And prattle with unction
At every function
To get my name in print.
It is my daily and dear endeavor,
My constant end and aim,
To scatter my ducats
In barrels and buckets,
And advertise my name.

My object all sublime, etc.
[*Goes out, throwing money around.*

BALLADE OF OBLIVION

WHO'S to be President?
Editors can't agree;
So many prominent
Statesmen at liberty.
Who is the next V. P.?
Where is *his* oriflamme?
Pardon if I tee-hee:
Nobody cares a dam.

Nobody gives a cent
Under the canopy;
Devil an argument,
Devil a rivalry.
Any old nominee,
Any old shine or sham.
Second place? Fiddle-de-dee!
Nobody cares a dam.

Nobody cares a spent
Nickel that I can see.
You are indifferent,
I must confess ongwee.
Yawneth the bourgeoisie,
Yawneth your Uncle Sam.
Tail of the ticket? Gee!
Nobody cares a dam.

Who the V. P. may be —
Japheth or Shem or Ham —
Prince, between you and me,
Nobody cares a dam.

TO JULIA—STYLES OF 1913

JULIA, I am far from prudish
(Though in virtue trebly armed),
But when I behold you nudish
I am also far from charmed.
You may fancy you bereave me
Of my senses: truth be told,
Your avowed revealments leave me
Absolutely cold.

Were your various lines Hogarthian,
That were "something else again":
Ere I fled, no arrow Parthian
Should be pointed with my pen.
You may flaunt your lines before me,
Far from ravished is mine eye.
Au contraire, they merely bore me;
I've no cause to fly.

Julia, just a word between us —
Further I'd not have it go:
You are not a sea-born Venus,
As the merest glance will show.
If this friendly counsel passes
I should also like to add,
Love's not blind — why give him glasses
Till his eyes are bad?

Lady, though your clothes are lawful
They are in the worst of taste.
Julia, you are something awful,
And your judgment is misplaced.
History, that dates from Eden,
Puts us next to nature's plan:
Only beauty that is hidden
Tantalizes Man.

AFTER THE MOVING

POETS can't work in a clutter!
[Business of trying to think.]
Here the confusion is utter!
What has become of the ink?

[Business of trying to think,
Pegasus trying to caper.]
What *has* become of the ink?
Where in the world is the paper?

Pegasus trying to caper! —
This is a great little place.
Where in the world *is* the paper?
Packed in some barrel or case.

This is a great little place
For a poetic suggestion!
"Packed in *some* barrel or case,"
This the reply to my question.

For a poetic suggestion
I must take refuge in flight.
This the reply to my question:
"Go to the office and write."

I must take refuge in flight;
Here there is utter confusion.
"Go to the office and write,"—
That is the only conclusion.

Here there is utter confusion,
So I beg leave to withdraw;
That is the only conclusion.
Order is heaven's first law.

So I beg leave to withdraw;
Here the confusion is utter.
Order is heaven's first law:
Poets can't work in a clutter.

THE GREAT OBSESSION

LADY with the rampant broom,
Fixed though your resolve may be,
Hearken ere you clean this room
To a word or two from me.

Know you not that microbes lurk
Here and there and everywhere,
And that all this 'cleaning' work
Simply populates the air?

Now these microbes lie asleep,
Harmless, in a thousand nooks;
Dormant where the dust is deep,
Back of pictures, back of books.

Lady, clean, if clean you must,
But I say beware of these
Demons lurking in the dust,
'Pathogenic entities.'

Oh the many, many lives
Ignorantly cast away
By our dust-disturbing wives
Since the first spring-cleaning day!

Lady with the cleaning bee,
  You are much too young to die.
Take a timely tip from me:
  Let the sleeping microbe lie!

COMMERCE AND ART

AN ordinary playhouse, unendowed,
The seats all filled and all the boxes taken;
A blaze of lights, a happy, careless crowd,
Material, irreverent, laughter-shaken;
A comedy by Shakespeare or by Shaw,
Something poetical or controversial,
A first-rate play, performed without a flaw:
All right, of course. But oh it's *so* commercial!

A temple dim, about a quarter filled,
A cloistral place to Culture dedicated,
A knot of worshippers, uplifted, thrilled,
By thoughts unutterable agitated;
A play by Strindberg or Euripides —
A joyous skit to solace and refresh us —
Something to edify if not to please:
It's not well done. But oh it *is* so precious!

THE LAY OF THE LAST GOLFER

COME Winter, come, and free me from the thrall
Of Golf! Bestrew the lureful links with snow:
For they that are condemned to chase the ball
Are hopeless as the Person with the Hoe.

Midsummer form is gone, nor all my play
Can win it back to cancel half a stroke;
The driver's off, the brassie's had its day,
The mashie's blown, my putting is a joke.

And yet I chase the ball around the lot
(He needs must whom the golfing devil drives),
Hoping I may — but knowing well I'll not —
Pull off a brilliant string of fours and fives.

Sound, Winter, then, "the trumpets of the sky,"
Lock up the links and throw away the key;
Else, like a self-doomed Sisyphus, must I
Pursue this foolish game from tee to tee.

BON VOYAGE!

TO-DAY our well-known Ship of State
Is yielded to a new commander,
Whose fame, 'tis pleasant to relate,
Has not been dimmed by breath of slander:
A mariner trueblue!
We like the captain, but mislike his crew.

A motley crew. Some, like their chief,
Are brave to face the wildest weather;
Others will cry to run or reef,
And show to storm the craven's feather.
The officers are leal:
The keen-eyed, lean-faced skipper holds the wheel.

The course is plain — straight out to sea,
With all sail set and bands a-blowing;
Scylla (see cartoons) on the lee,
Charybdis on the weather showing.
"Sail on, O Ship of State!"
No one is "hanging breathless" on your fate.

You've ridden out unnumbered blows,
And weathered all cartoon disasters,
With every kind of crew, God knows,
And guided by the least of masters.
You always come to port,
'Spite navigation of the wildest sort.

"Sail on, O Union strong and great!"
Whatever happens we'll not worry.
Sail on, sail on, O Ship of State!
You'll keep afloat in any flurry.
So no concern we feel:
Our thought is of the man who holds the wheel.

Skipper, your health! and luck to you!
May all prosperity betide you!
Just fix one eye upon that crew,
And keep the nine-tailed cat beside you.
And should the rascals strike,
Give them the yard-arm or the marlinspike.

March 4, 1913.

BALLADE OF ONE VIRTUE

I LEAVE, or shall, "a name to other times"
(At some small sacrifice of modesty)
"Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes,"
Like that of Byron's Terror of the Sea.
Yet, buried in abysmal infamy,
By almost every sin poetic stained,
Still may I lift my head, of one fault free:
Never have I the Sonnet form profaned.

In common with a host of scribbling mimes,
Poetic license I've spelt anarchy;
I've smashed all rules (here goes one!) forty times,
And have, with pert and flippant parody,
Murdered the classics in a 'fiendish glee.'
Few are the misdemeanors I've disdained;
And yet — this stiffens up my vertebræ —
Never have I the Sonnet form profaned.

That form, which genius heaven-born sublimes
And less than genius beggars, reverently
I have exempted from my foolish rimes;
For that at least I may not penance dree.

"Oh my offense is rank!" as you agree:
But grant me this one virtue — I've
refrained
From writing Sonnets. Heaven my witness
be,
Never have I the Sonnet form profaned.

Apollo, lord, when in thy chancery
My many crimes are cried, and I arraigned
With other doggerel bards, be this my plea:
Never have I the Sonnet form profaned.

THE SEASON OPENS

THE tariff battle now is on,
Wide-mouthed Revision sounds
tantivy!
The tax will be removed anon
From dragon's-blood and divi-divi.
And east and west you hear men say,
"*Going to the baseball game to-day?*"

Our frank and fearless President
Is smashing this and that tradition,
And stuffing with astonishment
The oldest living politician.
And east and west you hear men cry,
"*Wait for a good one! That's the eye!*"

Embattled dames in London Town,
Forgetting they are perfect ladies,
Are blowing up and burning down,
And raising every sort of Hades.
And east and west you hear the shout,
"*The pitcher's rotten! Take him out!*"

The peace of Europe is at stake,
The cannons roar, the sabres rattle;
A dozen kingdoms are a-quake,
And listening for the call to battle.
And east and west men yell, "*Keep cool!
Sit down there! Let the umpire rule!*"

April 10, 1913.

TO MARY GARDEN

I don't care for her voice, but I think she's a wonderful actress—The Cannery, Shelf K, Jar 48

SO wonderful your art, if you preferred
Drayma to opry, you'd be all the
mustard;
For you (ecstatic pressmen have averred)
Have Sarah Bernhardt larruped to a custard.

So marvelous your voice, too, if you cared
With turns and trills and tra-la-las to
dazzle,
You'd have (enraptured critics have
declared),
All other singers beaten to a frazzle.

So eloquent your legs, were it your whim
To caper nimbly in a classic measure,
Terpsichore (entranced reviewers hymn),
Would swoon upon her lyre from very
pleasure.

If there be aught you *cannot* do, 'twould seem
The world has yet that something to dis-
cover.
One has to hand it to you. You're a scream.
And 'tis a joy to watch you put it over.

A LOVER'S COMPLAINT

"Undarned socks are signs of prosperity"—A Commercial Authority

WHENAS abroad my Julia goes,
Ah me, how disenchanting shows
A hole in Julia's silken hose!

And when I cast mine eyes and see
This puncture of prosperity,
Ah, how that puncture paineth me!

For what care I that rents are high,
That cost-of-living scales the sky? —
That hole offends the lover's eye.

My adoration 'gins to dim,
However neat and trig and trim
May be my Julia's ankle slim.

Ah me, again! If maidens knew
The damage such a rent will do,
'Twould never be exposed to view.

Instead they'd wear, when Boreas blows,
The reinforced and holeproof hose
That's Harveyized at heels and toes.

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE

THE Golfer stood in his room at night,
Pitching balls to a padded chair.
He could work his mashie *there* all right,
But on the links he was in despair:
'Twas top and sclaff,
Till a horse would laugh,
And the best he'd get was a measly half.
"I *never* shall learn this game," quoth he.
"*And I'd sell my soul for a seventy-three!*"

No sooner said, on this fateful night,
Than the Devil walked in, with a bow polite.
"Pledge me your soul, my friend," said he,
"And to-morrow you'll shoot a seventy-three.
Don't think at all
Of stance or grip,
Just swat the ball
And let 'er rip.
Leave it to me: I'll turn the trick;
You pin your faith to your Uncle Nick."
"Done!" said the Golfer — "gladly, too."
"You're on," said the Devil. "Good-night
to you."

Next day, when "Mac" drove off the tee
For the first long hole, he was down in three;
And every other, or near or far,
Was played, somehow, in exactly par.
He sliced, he hooked, he sclaffed, he topped,
But somehow or other he always copped.
If he hit a bunker he blundered o'er
And rolled to the pin for an easy four.
Over the green, or short, or up,
He trickled the next one to the cup.
Once, when he pulled to a bunker tall,
Which promised to grab and hold his ball,
A caddie said, as he rubbed his eye,
That a *hoof* had caromed the pellet by;
But none suspected, who saw it kick,
'Twas the cloven hoof of your Uncle Nick.

Hole by hole,
To the eighteenth goal,
Walked the man who had sold his soul.
Drive and iron, and pitch and poke,
Till, matching his card, his friends went
broke.
For, adding his score, they found that he
Had shot the course in a *seventy-three!*

Whether his bargain he ought to rue
Depends of course on the point of view.
At least "Mac's" happier now by far
Than when he was eighteen over par.
He never worries about the trade,
  Or ever gives it a thought at all;
And the only sign of the pact he made
  Is a puff of smoke where he hits the ball.

A BALLADE OF IMMORTALS

WOOF MOOK, I admit, is some name,
Dink Botts is transcended by few,
Reserved in the Temple of Fame
A niche for Nik Kik and Jap Pugh;
Witz Wobbles is something to chew,
Nor must Wava Junk be forgot;
But, take the Academy through,
Jet Wimp is the best of the lot.

Lot Snoddy gets into the game,
Klim Strize has a place in the zoo,
Clint Sipe and Ed Ek we proclaim,
And others who pass in review.
Pod Dismuke we would not pooh-pooh,
Consid'rable monicker, what?
But, give each Immortal his due,
Jet Wimp is the best of the lot.

There's a chink and clink to the same;
It sticks, as tenacious as glue.
It makes all the others seem tame;
It's a scream, it's a hullabaloo.
Of all the cognominal crew,
I venture to ween and to wot,
Jet Wimp is the Who of "Who's Who,"
Jet Wimp is the best of the lot.

Eh, Prince? I will leave it to you:
Oblivion never can blot
That name which will ever be new!—
Jet Wimp is the best of the lot.

FAITH SERENE

"Little man, why so hot?"—Emerson

YOU blaze when men assail your faith,
And toryism wakes your ire:
Can you not summon up the wraith
Of Bruno in his shroud of fire?

You fume and fret at skeptic sneers,
And unbelief's eternal clack;
Can you not cross the bridge of years
To Galileo on the rack?

These men of old who spread the light,
And died of torture and neglect
Had much to hazard for the right:
You merely stake your self-respect.

These men, who preached with holy zeal
The things that every schoolboy knows,
Were bent and broken on the wheel
By ruthless and fanatic foes.

But clear the anger from your brow;
Men are no longer racked and whipped.
The ruthless hand is palsied now,
And persecution's claws are clipped.

Confess your creed, be what it may,
And toward the light serenely move.
The simple faith you hold to-day
To-morrow's verdict shall approve.

UTOPIA

WHEN the Socialist programme is carried,
With balm for our every hurt,
The world will no longer be harried
By poverty, hunger, and dirt.
For each will be sure of a lodging,
And eatables daily, times three,
With never a debt to be dodging —
And heavens, how dull it will be!

Then Right, for a change, will be master,
And Justice will open her eyes.
The widow will fear no disaster,
The orphan will stifle his sighs.
With never a trouble to borrow,
From worry we all may be free.
The State will take care of to-morrow —
And heavens, how dull it will be!

No drinking, carousing, and fighting,
No sins that disfigure our time;
No journalists trained to the writing
Of stories of passion and crime.
Enough of the future is hinted;
Utopia you clearly foresee.
Newspapers of course will be printed —
And heavens, how dull they will be!

THE LATEST BOOK

'BAFFLING, absorbing, astounding, inspiring,'
'Deliciously piquant,' 'original,' 'grand,'
'Humor unflagging,' 'invention untiring,'
'With Dickens and Thackeray fitted to stand,'
'Breathless,' 'exciting,' 'sensational,' 'ripping,'
'Highly dramatic,' 'a masterpiece,' 'great,'
'Poignant,' 'authentic,' 'convincing and gripping' —
So the reviews and advertisements state.

'Masterful,' 'marvelous,' 'massive,' 'amazing,'
'Witty and wise,' 'every promise fulfills,'
'Dazzling,' 'dumfoundering,' 'daring and dazing,'
'Packed full of action,' 'abounding in thrills,'
'Charmingly whimsical,' 'striking,' 'compelling,'
'Technic enormous,' 'it marks an advance,'
'All other writers of fiction excelling,'
'Wealth of ideas,' 'a brilliant romance.'

Thus the reviewers in rapturous chorus;
Thus the book booster composing his brays.
Ripped are whole pages from Roget's Thesaurus,
Piled upon Ossa a Pelion of praise.
Greatest of novels, beyond contradiction,
Here is the triumph that none may deny;
This is the ultimate whisper in fiction.
Surely you'll read it. No? Neither shall I.

MODERN MATRIMONY

He

DEAR one, when we exchange our vows
We'll knot the loosest sort of tie;
For our ideals, like our brows,
Are broad and high.

She

A simple hitch I should prefer,
As simple as we can devise;
A lovers'-bowline, as it were —
One yank unties.

He

This nuptial pact shall not coerce
Our own sweet wills a single jot.
We'll chop 'for better or for worse,'
And all that rot.

She

My love, your sentiments are mine;
I echo them with all my heart.
I simply can't endure that line —
'Till death us part.'

He

My idol, I am overjoyed!
I shan't love twice, but if I *should*
This contract will be null and void:
That's understood.

She

I shall not dream of liberty,
  But if I *should* — you'll understand
The bonds that bind us now will be
  As ropes of sand.

He

I am the needle, you the pole!
  O Pole, my constancy you know.
But should I not remain heart-whole
  I'm free to go.

She

I am the flower, you the sun!
  O Sun, you know my constancy.
But if I choose to cut and run
  You quite agree.

Together

Since you love me as I love you,
  Herewith a sacred troth we plight.
Each to the other will be true:
  If not — good night!

OH JOY

It is announced that the watchword of the Little Theater will be "Joy"

COME and trip it as ye go,
On the light dramatic toe.
Dole abandon, dry the tear,
Ye who hope to enter here.

For our end and aim is Joy;
All our offerings brace and buoy;
We whose watchword is "Be gay,"
We will chase old Care away.

Are you morbid, are you blue?
Is the weary world askew? —
Do not drown yourself in drink:
Come and laugh with Maeterlinck.

Are you solemn, are you sad? —
Something Greek will make you glad.
Are you wallowing in grief? —
Ibsen will provide relief.

Are you troubled with the pip? —
There is balm in quirk and quip.
Strindberg is the man you need:
He's the cheery little Swede!

Haste thee, then, and let us prance
In a Dionysiac dance.
Come and trip it as ye go,
On the light dramatic toe.

THE CURRENCY BILL

NOW, Jones was a man of a marvelous mind
To which nothing was foreign or strange.
He could talk by the hour,
With a singular power,
On topics the widest in range.
There was nothing in heaven and zero on earth
That baffled his toppiece, until
He rashly one day
In a confident way
Attempted the Currency Bill.

The Tariff to Jones was as plain as a church,
He threaded its mazes with ease;
While the weight of the stars
Or the ditches on Mars
Were trifles for afternoon teas.
The color-line problem, the Japanese row,
He discussed with exceptional skill;
But his brain had a storm
When he tried to inform
His friends on the Currency Bill.

That got him. His wits were reduced to
a pulp,
All crumpled the cells of his brain.
They took him away
In a wagon next day
To a place for the cureless insane.
He sits on a bench and makes figures and
things,
And all men may obtain, if they will,
From this bug financier
A remarkably clear
Account of the Currency Bill.

THE JEST OF YESTERYEAR

"ONCE upon a midnight dreary"—
Wait a moment, do not go;
This is not another weary
Paraphrase of Mr Poe.
True, the volume that I pondered
Was of quaint, forgotten lore
That got by (but how, I wondered!)
In the days entitled 'yore.'

Things were gathered in this volume
Over which our fathers roared —
Gems from many a by-gone colyum,
Writ by Billings, Twain, and Ward.
Some of it, of course, was funny,
More was sad as sad can be.
How it ever got the money
Is a miracle to me.

So, when dreary seems *my* colyum,
When I fear it grows a bore,
I take down that yellowed volume
Of forgotten comic lore.
Seeking vainly to discover
Something really rich and rare,
"Gosh!" I say, "if *that* got over,
Why should *anyone* despair?"

BETWEEN TWO CRITICS

NOW, when I read Old Doctor Hackett
Upon the operatic racket
I murmur, as I tear my hair,
"Oh gosh, I wish that I'd been there!"

But when I turn to Doctor Gunn
And read of what was sung and done
I rearrange my hair and say,
"Oh gosh, I'm glad I stayed away!"

OLD STUFF

IF I go to see the play,
Of the story I am certain;
Promptly it gets under way
With the lifting of the curtain.
Builded all that's said and done
On the ancient recipe —
'Tis the same old Two and One:
A and B in love with C.

If I read the latest book,
There's the mossy situation;
One may confidently look
For the trite triangulation.
Old as time, but ever new,
Seemingly, this tale of Three —
Same old yarn of One and Two:
A and C in love with B.

If I cast my eyes around,
Far and near and middle distance,
Still the formula is found
In our everyday existence.
Everywhere I look I see —
Fact or fiction, life or play —
Still the little game of Three:
B and C in love with A.

While the ancient law fulfills,
  Myriad moons shall wane and wax.
Jack must have his pair of Jills,
  Jill must have her pair of Jacks.

VAGUE MEMORIES

I REMEMBER only vaguely
The house where *I* was born.
Of course, the prehistoric sun
Came peeping in at morn;
And this I *do* remember —
He always came too soon,
For ever since I was a child
I've wished to sleep till noon.

I have no recollection
Of flowers red and white,
Nor birds (except canaries)
To charm my childish sight.
And, now I come to view it,
This does not seem so queer,
For home was a metropolis
Until my eighteenth year.

Of course I *can* remember
The universal swing,
For even in a New York yard
They had that sort of thing.
"My spirit flew in feathers then,"
It whizzes that way now;
And all that I could ask would be
More feathers on my brow.

I remember, I remember
The clothes-poles bald and high;
I used to shinny up them then,
But now I'd sooner die.
I might pursue for pages
This vein of vague regret,
But that the union scale demands
Four rhymes to each octette.

LOVE'S AU REVOIR

"*SINCE there's no help, come let us kiss and part,—*
Nay I have done, you get no more of me."
To bring to perfect flower my strange wild art,
To live my strange wild life, I must be free.

"*Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,*
And when we meet at any other time,"
Let there be no suggestion in our brows
That I've philandered in a foreign clime.

"*Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,*
When, his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,"
Remember! — I'm another's until death,
Or till this new infatuation dies.

Au revoir! When we return (if I recover)
We'll get together, all four, and talk it over.

THE GENTLE CRITIC

"A DISMAL occupation mine,"
The Gentle Critic cried,
"To castigate one's dearest friends
And lacerate their pride.
Oh what a painful thing it is
To cavil and to chide!

"Whenever there's an opening
I always have the blues,
And to the hateful theater
I fare in leaden shoes.
And what a bitter task it is
To ventilate my views!

"Indeed it is a gloomy trade
To reprobate and ban,
For actors are a kindly folk
Who do the best they can;
And oh it is a joyless job
These kindly folk to pan.

"I weep for them," the Critic said,
"I deeply sympathize,"
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
Before his streaming eyes,
While sorting from his adjectives
Those of the largest size.

"NOTHING TO WEAR"

MISS Flora McFlimsy of Michigan Boul.
In spite of hot weather is perfectly cool.
She has it all over her namesake, the fair
Miss Flora McFlimsy of Madison Square,
Who, ages ago,
As most of you know,
Lamented the fact she had "nothing to wear."
Miss Flora of old bought her drygoods in Paris;
She shopped (you recall) with her friend Mrs Harris.
Her garments were many, and costly and rare,
And yet she complained she had nothing to wear.

But Flora McFlimsy of Boulevard Mich.
Dispenses with ev'ry superfluous stitch,
And clad in a single diaphanous gown
Parades in the sunlight, the joy of the town.
"And if I show through,
What harm does it do?"
Says Flora McFlimsy; "I leave it to you."

Why, none whatsoever, we beg to reply.
You are all to the good to our critical eye.
Proceed, Miss McFlimsy, as far as you
wish;
Parade in the sunlight on Boulevard Mish.,
And let, if it please you, your vanishing
dress
Grow fine by degrees and delightfully less,
Until, like the dame
Of evergreen fame.
You *really* have nothing whatever to wear,
Excepting a hank of remarkable hair.
And should you appear as the Lady Godiva,
We'll stand on the corner and hand you a
'Viva!'

TO LUCASTA

TELL me not, sweet, I am unkind
Because I heave a sigh
At thought of comforts left behind,
As countryward we fly.

Like you I hate, with hatred deep,
The city's broil and brawl;
But ah! to-night — where shall I sleep?
Or shall I sleep at all?

Like you, my love, I deeply crave
A touch of wood and wold;
But shall I skip my morning shave,
Or shave in water cold?

I loathe the city's grime and heat —
We cannot fly too fast;
But what, this week-end, shall I eat?
Or shall I sooner fast?

I love to hear the crickets rub
Their legs in choric glee;
But where, to-morrow, shall I tub?
Or shall I tubless be?

I joy to hear the froglets shrill
  Across the boggy lea;
But well I know the chiggers will
  Not do a thing to me.

A bas the town! Vive solitude!
  Hail, lovely country scenes!
All that you lack are beds and food
  And porcelain tubs and screens.

So, think not, sweet, I am unkind
  If I perchance should sigh
For creature comforts left behind,
  As from the town we fly.

TO AN APRIL EGG

Lines dashed off while the coffee percolated

EGG, ere I crack you I would muse upon
The flight of time — a topic somewhat frayed.
Ah me, some seven moons have come and gone
Since you were laid.

Much water, Egg, has washed the miller's wheel
Since that far morn when first you saw the light.
And now you bless my matutinal meal!
You bless — or blight.

For though I have my grocer's guarantee
That you are fresh, as fresh as may be had,
I'll lay him eight to five, or eight to three,
That you are bad.

Hence, Egg, I hesitate ere I apply
The knife. Art sweet, or rotten to the core?
The question gives me pause. Ah me! as I
Remarked before.

Enough of musing. Let us look inside.
Ah, yes. An egg of prehistoric breed.
Some long-lost April. Jane, the window — wide!
Ah me, indeed!

ESPECIALLY "THRU"

NOT least of Life's Little Afflictions,
To me, is the spelling that's simp.
A murrain and all maledictions
On spellers who mangle and skimp!
Their symbols as tortured and twisted
Are really too bad to be true;
I loathe every word they have listed —
Especially 'thru.'

To me the form 'prolog' is painful,
And 'catalog' gives me the pip;
Than 'thoro' there's nothing more baneful,
And 'program' would make a saint rip.
Oh wildly my hair I dishevel
At 'fotograf,' 'handsum,' and 'nu,'
For all of them look like the devil —
Especially 'thru.'

Reforms there's no shadow of call for
Encumber and clutter the earth;
It's funny what people will fall for
To give some reformer a berth.
Now, tak this dam simplifide speling —
Yes, tak it away 2 the Zu.
I lothe evry word beeond teling —
Espeshely 'thru.'

BALLADE OF THE "CHRISTMAS NUMBER"

A "NUMBER" colored for Christmas week,
Polychromatic beyond compare!
Words to describe it I vainly seek;
O'erwhelmed with wonder I sit and stare.
Some of the pictures are pretty fair,
Some are indifferent, some are flat;
But *one* there is that is rich and rare —
Give me the Guy in the Blue High Hat.

I like the girl of the umber cheek,
And her of the French-vermilion hair;
The maid with the madder dog's unique,
And the tot with the peagreen teddybear.
I'm charmed by the person debonair
Of the purple boot and the mustard spat,
And yet a preference I must air —
Give me the Guy in the Blue High Hat.

The crimson crow with the sky-blue beak
May not be paralleled anywhere;
And oh what a wild prismatic shriek
Are He-and-She in the cadmium chair.
The dame in the passionate pink portiere,
The cobalt cop and the carmine cat
Are good, but for one I chiefly care —
Give me the Guy in the Blue High Hat.

Color? The rainbow is on a tear,
The well-known prism is on a bat.
Color? My choice I must still declare —
Give me the Guy in the Blue High Hat.

MEDITATIONS BY A MOSSY STONE

"Give me ten accomplished men for readers, and I am content"—Walter Savage Landor

WHAT? Ten accomplished readers?
That, meseems,
Puts much too high a value on a pen.
I never in my most presumptuous dreams
Have thought of ten!

Content, indeed! I should be flattered pink;
To please a smaller clientele I strive.
I've never thought, nor ever dared to think,
Of six — or five.

Why, five accomplished readers are a host;
So large a number quite abashes me.
If I have thought at all, I've thought, at
most
Of two — or three.

And when I view this Motley Monument
Of jape and jingle, paragraph and pun.
I sometimes feel that I should be content
With one — or none.

NEW LEAVES

"And every day that I've been good, I get an orange after food"—Stevenson

FROM now until the new year ends,
This my resolve, and naught can
swerve it:
I will not knock my various friends
Unless my various friends deserve it.

TO CONTRIBUTORS

ALTHO' the children of your brain
May fail, perchance, of publication,
Think not, Contribs, your efforts vain
Or lacking an appreciation.

It is my habit when I ope
The stack of thoughts you daily utter,
To let each literary hope
Gently beneath the table flutter —

All save the few for which there's room,
Or that may find a corner later.
The others flutter to their doom,
And huddle 'gainst the radiator.

And here to this poetic heap
Of jests and jingles without number
The office kitten comes to sleep.
Ah, what a couch for feline slumber!

She paws in the poetic pile,
Contributed by many muses;
She builds a bed to suit her style,
Then, purring, settles down and snoozes.

And so, dear friends, your little lays
Are certain of appreciation.
Breathe to yourself this paraphrase
Of poet Southey's dedication: —

"Go, little thought, from this my pipe;
Be on your way, and do not tarry.
Though you may miss the Line-o'-Type,
You'll help to make a bed for Carrie."

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

"FOR love of Mike," some readers say,
What *do* you mean by w. k.?"
The least reflection would have shown
It could mean nothing but w. k.

Then, many clever folks confess
They cannot fathom s. to s.
Surely that shouldn't be all Greek:
What can it mean but s. to s.?

From Denver writeth Mr Neff,
Who cannot puzzle out o. f.
Surely a man's to be compassioned
Who hesitates before o. f.

Again, we are besought to tell
What's understood by b. and l.
And yet it's obvious as a barge
That b. and l. is b. and l.

Another pens, "I hate to trouble you,
But what is meant by b. t. w.?"
And we supposed 'twas plain as day
It represented b. t. w.!

We even have been asked to spell
That curt locution, m. or l.
Now, anybody ought to guess
That m. or l. is m. or l.

So geht es. Almost e. o. d.
We get requests to "print a key,"
And e. o. d., we haste to say,
Is short for e. o. d.

ISLES OF SAFETY

"To avoid colds, keep out of crowds"—Dr Evans

HOW can I 'scape a crowd to-day
In all this teeming city?
I know. I'll go to see a play
That's really wise and witty.

But if too many should be there,
The atmosphere a-tainting,
I'll hunt a picture gallery where
They charge to see a painting.

If some one there should chance to be,
And still I'd dodge the pub.,
I'll hie me to the library
Of almost any club.

To other places I may go,
For ample breathing spaces;
And doubtless, reader, you too know
A lot of likely places.

THE SATURATION POINT

Lines precipitated by witnessing a performance of "Conchita"

I DON'T object to Sex, as such;
'Tis not my mind to flout it.
This world would not amount to much,
One may concede, without it.

But Lord! I'm sick of plays that sound
An 'elemental passion,'
In which folks drag each other round
In elemental fashion.

I'm tired of 'primal passion' fits,
In opry and in drammer.
Oh can the passional jiu-jits',
And open up some glamour.

"LET NOT AMBITION MOCK"

THERE dwells among the trodden ways,
Within the limelight's glow,
A man whom very many praise
And many others know.

Though high his titles, wide his fame,
And boundless, too, his pelf,
I do not know this person's name;
He does not know himself.

That is (to make my meaning clear),
He's known from sea to sea;
And yet 'twould tax the deepest seer
To say who he may be.

I mean (more simply still to state),
His name is now unknown;
And yet we know relentless fate
Has marked him for its own.

Although his name may be to-day
On many a person's tongue,
In one short year he'll fade away,
Unwept, unsobbed, unsung.

He little recks that Nemesis
  Will snatch him by surprise:
And sure, where ignorance is bliss
  'Twere folly to be wise.

Who is this man so prominent?
  Why must he fade so soon?
He is our next Vice President:
  The blow will fall in June.

And then — cold, gray Oblivion!
  . . . . . .
  Let not ambition mock
This brother to the mastodon
  And cousin to the roc.

PROPERTIUS SINGS

BOOK I. ELEGY I

FAIR Cynthia was first to undo me,
I fell for her beautiful eyes;
And soon every Roman that knew me
To my indiscretions got wise.
Some gait has yours truly been going —
I've hit all the high-spots of sin;
The wild oats that I have been sowing
Would fill, *crede mihi*, a bin.

Milanion, who loved Atalanta,
Succeeded by being a pest —
Contriving at last to implant a
Reciprocal love in her breast;
But I've been so long off the woo stuff,
I'm either a boob or too bold;
I'm jerry to none of the new stuff,
And I have forgotten the old.

Ye abracadabra professors,
Ye wizards and ringers of bells,
Compounders of pills, and possessors
Of magical passwords and spells,
Get next to the dame of my fancy,
And make me look good in her sight;
Come on with your damned necromancy,
Or else, for Propertius, good night!

Oh, me for the wings of the morning,
The uttermost parts of the earth!
I'd leave to all lovers a warning,
To chew on for all it is worth.
And this my advice (if you ask it):
From paths that are primrose refrain:
Put all of your eggs in one basket,
The love that is safe and is sane.

ON THE FLOOR

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore! Throw that stuff upon the floor!"

READERS send me every day
Quips and jingles by the score;
Some of which, I grieve to say,
Must be thrown upon the floor.

Some are clever, some are crude,
Some have been in print before;
Some, alack, are much too good
To be tossed upon the floor.

Space, however, has its bounds,
As I've mentioned heretofore;
And however sad it sounds,
Something must go on the floor.

It is not that I regard
Things *I* write superior:
Many a gem of mine is barred,
And is flung upon the floor.

Many a mighty line I trace,
Many a thought in which I soar; —
But there simply isn't space,
So I cast it on the floor.

Do I hear some reader say,
Do I hear some reader roar,
"Why not print *my* verses, pray?
Pitch *your* verses on the floor!"

True, I've used up precious space
(And shall need a little more)
To present my simple case —
Why I chuck things on the floor;

But I fear you're unaware
Just how keenly I deplore
The compulsion brought to bear
When I drop stuff on the floor.

You don't always know, I fear,
That I read your verses o'er
And, with many a briny tear,
Throw them sadly on the floor.

THE ETERNAL BROMIDE

WHEN Adam dolve and Eva span,
And through the paths of Eden strayed,
He cut for her a fig-leaf fan —
'Twas ninety-something in the shade.
For days the temperature ran high,
'Twixt ninety and a hundred ranging;
Said Eve: "What funny weather! My!
I think the climate must be changing."

When good King Arthur held his court,
And Guin with all her maidens gay
Went forth in flowery meads to sport,
All in the merry month of May,
The day fell hot, and Guinevere
And Miss Elaine exclaimed together,
"The climate must be changing, dear;
I never knew such funny weather."

From neo-lithic days to now,
Recurrent this phenomenon;
The world has mopped a dripping brow
And passed the hoary saying on.
And while the sun pours forth its heat,
The wits of mortal man deranging,
We'll echo that bromidic bleat,
"I think the climate must be changing."

THE CREDIT SIDE

WHATEVER your opinion of my strummings,
Whatever your opinion of my lyre,
Whatever my poetical shortcomings,
However much I leave you to desire;
Tho' every song I sing should be a flivver,
One feather in my cap were sticking still—
I never said that "life is like a river,"
Or "faring up a hard, high hill."

I am at times, conceivably, bromidic;
My metaphors you may have met afore.
I am not always startling or fatidic;
My similes, conceivably, may bore.
My phrases may not set you all a-quiver,
Their power to surprise you may be nil;
But — I never said that life is like a river,
Or climbing up a hard, high hill.

One can't be sempiternally sulphitic,
One has to broach a bromide now and then;
And so I crave indulgence of the critic
If now and then a commonplace I pen.
Whatever be the goods that I deliver,
I've never sung and never, never will
Articulate that life is like a river
Or toiling up a hard, high hill.

DEGENERATE DAYS

ALTHOUGH not of a cloistral turn,
I do not care for fistic fêtes.
I never yearn a single yearn
For pugilistic joint debates.
Descriptions of affrays Homeric
Leave me as cool as Robert Herrick.

'Tis not a temperamental chill.
I do not hesitate to say
I'd like to watch an old-time mill
If I might sit, a summer's day,
Beside Carinthia in her carriage.
(See Meredith's "Amazing Marriage.")

Translate me to that vanished year,
A mise en scène like that disclose,
And I should joy to see and hear
The ding-dong-bang on jaw and nose —
The play of mighty paws, sans mittens,
Swung in an "upright fight of Britons."

But modern fistics do not thrall;
They're of a very different grain.
The Jeffs and Corbetts, one and all,
Give me, I'm free to say, a pain.
Enthusiasm? Not a riffle.
Fight news, to me, is awful piffle.

So should I seem to knock the game,
A scornful finger seem to point,
I hope it's clear I'm not to blame,
But that the time is out of joint.
That I should find the thing a bore is
The fault of Tempora and Mores.

WHEN I AM GONE

In the manner of Mr Le Gallienne

WHEN I am gone,
In the sweet bye and bye,
The same old sky
Will meet the same old plain —
When I am gone.
Yes, bye and bye,
Some sweet young thing, with face against the pane,
Will scan the sky,
And say, "I'll take m'umbrella; it may rain"—
When I am gone.

PROMETHEUS BOUND

CHAINED like Prometheus to his rock
Am I, and pecked of inky flock,
Because, this daily lump to leaven,
I filched a little fire from heaven.

Not more, I swear, than three per cent,
Yet sure and swift my punishment:
A flock of carping birds of prey
Are pecking at me all the day.

Well, let them peck, and peck again,
Mine be Promethean disdain,
Impervious as his classic rock
To every veiled or obvious knock.

Mine is the punishment of one
Who lights his taper in the sun,
A visitation dark and dire
On him who steals immortal fire.

The one compunction that I feel
Is that it was so small a steal.
Hang it! I wish I'd filched enough
To put a flame in this here stuff.

SUPPLICATION

BIND me in paper or bind me in boards;
If merit there be, let the text within show it.
Let nothing be added,
Don't let me be 'padded,'
And keep me from being an 'Ooze Leather
Poet.'

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